



OLD-GROWTH FOREST NETWORK



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: James River Park System to Join The Old-Growth Forest Network

DATE: May 28, 2019

Richmond, VA – On Wednesday, June 5 at 12:00 PM, the James River Park System (JRPS) will be formally inducted into the Old-Growth Forest Network. Joan Maloof, the Founder and Director of the Old-Growth Forest Network will officially dedicate the forest. The event will take place at Pony Pasture Rapids Park (7200 Riverside Drive, Richmond, VA 23225). Those wishing to join the celebration are encouraged to RSVP to CRLC.

More than 50 years ago local citizens defeated a proposed highway along the south side of the James River while others such as Joe Schaefer and Jack Keith mounted an effort to acquire parcels of undeveloped riverfront land. In 1966, Mr. Keith sought to induce City Council and encourage others to “act out of a sense of public spirit and civic pride to transform this dream into reality.” He and Mr. Schaefer donated the first 380 acres to the City of Richmond that created the foundation for the James River Park System in 1972.

On May 29, 2009, Governor Tim Kaine participated in the ceremonial signing of the deed of easement which provides the protection from timbering needed for this park to be included in the Old-Growth Forest Network. This event marks the 10th anniversary of that signing. The easement is cooperatively held by the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation, Enrichmond Foundation and the Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC).

“As the primary easement holder and legal steward of the park, CRLC is committed to conserve and protect the natural and historic land and water resources of Virginia’s capital region. Our commitment is reinvigorated during this anniversary year” said CRLC’s Executive Director, Parker Agelasto. Agelasto noted that nearly a decade ago Governor Kaine awarded CRLC a Silver Medal Environmental Excellence Award for its protection of the James River Park System with a perpetual conservation easement on 280 acres.

The easement enshrined permanent protections that prevent development of the land by the city or any future owner and ensure the safeguarding of its natural resources as an unique wilderness area. CRLC takes the lead on stewardship of the easement, conducting annual monitoring with the support of the Friends of the James River Park (FOJRP). As FOJRP conducts a community master plan for the future of the park, it is appropriate to take time to remember the ten-year anniversary of the conservation easement and reflect on the protections it affords.

The James River Park System now totals 562 acres and contains 280 acres of units under conservation easement that protect its natural resources in perpetuity. The units are: Belle Isle, Reedy Creek, Pony Pasture, Wetlands, Great Shiplock, Huguenot Flatwater, Manchester Climbing Wall, North Bank, and Pumphouse. The age of the oldest trees is not certain, but 100 rings have been counted on a downed loblolly pine and a downed chestnut oak. Several natural forest communities exist in the park, including Mesic Mixed Hardwood, Acidic Oak Hickory, and

Coastal Plain/Piedmont Floodplain Swamp. Tree species include: red and silver maple, white oak, bitternut hickory, hackberry, tulip tree, eastern cottonwood, American sycamore, river birch, black walnut, box elder, sweetbay, beech, and pawpaw.

These forests lie along the “founding river” of the United States. Here were Native American fishing villages, the earliest European colonial exploration, a Confederate prisoner of war camp, and early 19th century industrial development. They now provide respite, retreat, and recreation for urban and suburban residents of a city of 250,000 and a region of nearly 1.5 million. In 2018, JRPS welcomed nearly 2 million annual visitors and was the region’s highest attended attraction. The park’s forests are a crucial contributor to the city’s “green infrastructure” and essential to the quality of life and public health for the city of Richmond.

The mission of the Old-Growth Forest Network (OGFN) is to connect people with nature by creating a national network of protected, mature, publicly accessible forests. OGFN has over 90 forests in 22 states currently in the Network. The James River Park System was chosen as Richmond City’s representative in the Network and will be the 7th Virginia forest to join the Old-Growth Forest Network. The full list of forests may be viewed at www.oldgrowthforest.net.

“In addition to creating a network of forests we are also creating a network of people who care about forests,” says Maloof. The effort to identify and formally qualify a forest for inclusion in the Old-Growth Forest Network is largely dependent on volunteers. Laura Greenleaf and Parker Agelasto of the Capital Region Land Conservancy, have been valuable volunteer supporters of the Old-Growth Forest Network and very instrumental in helping JRPS to be included in the Network.

Whether its CRLC, FOJRP, JRPS Invasive Plant Task Force, Richmond Tree Stewards, James River Association, James River Advisory Council, James River Outdoor Coalition, RVA MORE or any of the many volunteer groups that give generously to make the James River Park System the crown jewel of the Richmond region, there is no denying that the “public spirit and civic pride” that Jack Keith sought in 1966 is very much alive in 2019.

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About Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC): Incorporated in March 2005 as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, CRLC seeks to conserve and protect the natural and historic land and water resources of Virginia’s Capital Region for the benefit of current and future generations. CRLC is the only non-profit organization devoted specifically to the conservation of land within the capital region serving the City of Richmond and the Counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan. CRLC educates landowners about voluntary land protection tools, facilitates the process of donating conservation easements, and holds conservation easements or co-holds easements with other conservation organizations. CRLC has helped protect more than 10,000 acres that includes fee simple ownership of 380 acres as well as easements on more than 2,200 acres.

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About Old-Growth Forest Network (OGFN): The mission of the Old-Growth Forest Network (OGFN) is to connect people with nature by creating a national network of protected, mature, publicly accessible forests. The goal is to preserve at least one forest in every county in the United States that can sustain a forest, estimated to be 2,370 out of a total of 3,140 counties. OGFN's program works to identify forests for the Network, ensure their protection from logging, and inform people of the forest locations. OGFN also educates about the extraordinary ecological benefits of old-growth forests, and speaks out regarding immediate threats to specific ancient forests.

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